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DE RUEHPU #0161/01 0321547
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7602
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1777
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1585
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO PRIORITY 0734
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1008
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1414

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000161

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
INL FOR KEVIN BROWN AND ANGELIC YOUNG
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [HA](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [KTEX](#)
SUBJECT: HAITI MONTHLY: JANUARY 2008

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¶1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

¶2. (U) Summary: This is a monthly report on various topics of interest which do not merit a full reporting cable.

¶3. (U) STUDENT PROTESTS
In mid- to late January, students barricaded themselves in the Haitian State University Faculty of Agronomy building, demanding the government place them in an agronomy program. One of the slogans of the sit-in was "Up with national production, down with imports." The Ministry of Agriculture entered into negotiations with students, and reached tentative agreement the week of January 28 that the university would modify parts of the curriculum.

¶4. (U) HAITI'S NUMBER 2 CARNIVAL: BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER
Emboffs attended the annual Carnival celebration in the southern city of Jacmel, known for its hours-long parade of colorful, creative, and at times politically charged paper mache masks. Jacmel holds its Carnival a week before Carnival in Port au Prince. Minister of Culture and Communication Eddy Lubin, whose predecessor resigned following accusations of misappropriation of Carnival funds, observed the entire parade from his VIP viewing stand. Several Embassy officers were in attendance, and noticed a strong police presence and no incidents of public disorder. Jacmel received the second largest allocation (after Port-au-Prince) from the Ministry's USD 2.2 million allocated for Carnival 2008. Jacmel Chamber of Commerce President Franz Large commented to Poloff that he was very proud of the city's 2008 Carnival, particularly noting high security and the renowned Jacmelien hospitality. City leaders, desperately seeking to increase tourism to the city, hope the successful Carnival will bring an increase in overall tourism, according to Large. Several revelers noted that the Carnival was better attended, and with more creative masks, than 2007.

¶5. (U) MINUSTAH OUTLINES BORDER CONTROL EFFORTS
MINUSTAH announced January 7 that it would initially focus

border control efforts on the land crossings at Ouanaminthe, Belladere, Malpasse, and Anse-a-Pitres. MINUSTAH plans to station a platoon of approximately 40 to 50 soldiers at each of these crossings. MINUSTAH also intends to place a contingent of six United Nations police officers at each crossing. After securing these land crossings, MINUSTAH would focus efforts on port control and later establish a maritime component.

16. (SBU) BUT PEOPLE MUST TRAVEL

Radio Metropole reported January 16 that despite the presence of Dominican and MINUSTAH forces on the Haitian-Dominican Republic land border, the border remains as porous as before their deployment. (Comment: Embassy assesses this is probably the case; more time will be needed for increased MINUSTAH and Haitian National Police efforts to police the border to have any effect. End comment.) Meanwhile, reverberations continue in Haiti over the Dominican Republic government's increased repatriation of illegal Haitian migrants.

17. (U) CHICKEN, EGGS, AND BANANAS

Haiti continues to focus on perceived and anticipated retaliation by Dominican producers against the GoH' ban on Dominican chicken and egg imports due to the discovery of the H5N2 avian flu virus. Local press report a threat by Dominican poultry and egg vendors to halt exports of all foodstuffs to Haiti if Haitian authorities do not lift the import ban. Separately, a major Haitian newspaper noted January 22 that the Dominican Republic has effectively stopped exporting bananas to Haiti after Tropical Storm Noel reportedly damaged many Dominican banana plantations. Since Haiti does not produce enough bananas to meet domestic demand, the price of bananas in Haiti has doubled.

18. (U) PROTESTS AGAINST INFLATION

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A group numbering at least 500, reportedly from Cite Soleil, demonstrated peacefully January 25 in front of the parliament building against the rising cost of living - an issue that is becoming a focus of anti-government sentiment. Radio Kiskeya reported January 23 that popular organizations affiliated with the Lavalas political party plan demonstrations against the GoH immediately after Carnival. Several such groups appeared on TNH television news in mid-January declaring their intention to mount large demonstrations.

19. (U) NEW SOCIALIST PARTY FORMS

Louis Antoine Henry announced January 28 the formation of a new political party, the Haitian Socialist Movement of the 21st Century (MOSHA). In a televised ceremony, Henry claimed his party, which advocates a more equitable distribution of resources, had 30,000 members and would field candidates in the upcoming senatorial elections. (Comment: Though new and small parties are ubiquitous in Haiti, it remains unclear that MOSHA has the capacity to field candidates in the upcoming elections, and who, if anyone, is bankrolling the party. End comment.)

110. (SBU) COMMISSION ON SECURITY TO CONSIDER SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES

The Presidential Commission for Reflection on the Reinforcement of Security, headed by Patrick Elie, announced January 29 that its recommendations to reinforce security in Haiti will rely on consultations with all GoH institutions that have a role in security, on suggestions from private citizens, and on models from other countries such as Panama. A previous commission on the same subject presented a single recommendation -- that the GoH reconstitute the Haitian Army. President Preval requested that the new commission take "a step back" and present him with multiple options, according to commission member and historian Georges Michel. Elie announced that the commission is proposing two options: a border protection or public security force composed either of professionals or individuals in "military service." The

latter would be capable of protecting Haitians from both internal and external conflicts, thereby eliminating the need for international intervention. The Commission's press release noted that the Commission would soon release a preliminary report and a definitive report within a year. This issue "army or no army" for Haiti is not moving forward quickly, probably the design of President Preval.

¶11. (SBU) GRAFFITI WARS

Pro- and anti-Aristide graffiti is appearing in the upscale Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Pacot and areas near Prime Minister Alexis's office and residence. In Pacot, the graffiti is pro-Aristide (typically "King Aristide" or "Live Aristide") whereas in the vicinity of the PM's office, the graffiti is anti-GoH (variations of "Down with Alexis"). In Pacot, unknown persons whitewash the graffiti, while in areas near the Primature, Alexis supporters simply scrawl over the offending messages. Graffiti also has reappeared on the white walls of the parliament building, which were only recently painted in preparation for the January 14 opening of the new legislative session. Graffiti denouncing Chief Prosecutor Claudy Gasant has begun to appear. (Comment: Though political graffiti is commonplace in Port-au-Prince, the quantity and diversity of targets appear to be on the rise, perhaps signaling growing disenchantment with the GoH's performance. End comment.)
SANDERSON